

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 AGRE-00 COME-00 STR-04 TRSE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
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INFO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

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MONROVIA FOR AGATT

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: EAGR EAID SL
SUBJ: RICE PURCHASE BY SIERRA LEONE

REF: FREETOWN 4104

1. SUMMARY: GOSL HAS PURCHASED 5,000 METRIC TONS OF RICE FROM IVORY COAST AND PLANS TO PURCHASE UP TO 15,000 TONS FROM EGYPT DURING 1977. GOSL ALSO HAS SHOWN INTEREST IN RICE PURCHASES UNDER PL-480 PROGRAM. DESPITE RECENT PROGRESS, SIERRA LEONE STILL IS NOT SELF-SUFFICIENT IN RICE AND IMPORTS WILL CONTINUE TO ABSORB FOREIGN EXCHANGE. END SUMMARY

2. GOSL RECENTLY CONCLUDED AGREEMENT TO PURCHASE 5,000 METRIC TONS OF RICE FROM IVORY COAST TO MEET EXPECTED 1976 SHORTFALL, AND HAS CONTRACTED WITH EGYPT FOR 10,000 TONS WITH AN OPTION FOR 5,000 ADDITIONAL TONS FOR 1977 DELIVERY. THESE ARE FIRST RICE IMPORTS SINCE 1974. TRANSACTIONS ARE THROUGH WHOLLY GOVERNMENT OWNED BUYING AGENCY, RICE CORPORATION. 1977 PURCHASES WILL BE PAID FOR BY LETTER OF CREDITY BACKED BY BANK OF SIERRA LEONE. GOSL HAS INDICATED INTEREST IN PL-480 TITLE I PROGRAM
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FOR RICE AND EMBASSY REQUESTED 5,000 TONS RICE THRU PL-480 TITLE I IN ADDITION TO 5,000 TONS WHEAT (REFTEL).

3. PURCHASE FROM IVORY COAST WAS IN RESPONSE TO OBSERVED MARKET SCARCITY. WHILE PROJECTED PURCHASES FOR 1977 ARE BASED ON LIMITED STATISTICS, NEED FOR PL-480 TITLE I HAS BEEN CONFIRMED

BY REPUTABLE LOCAL AND EXPATRIATE AGRICULTURAL MINISTRY OFFICIALS. PRODUCTION ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT 1976 RICE HARVEST FELL SHORT OF THAT OF 1975 AS BOLILAND ACREAGE UNDER MECHANICAL CULTIVATION DECREASED DUE TO MECHANICAL PROBLEMS, WHILE UPLAND RICE PRODUCTION SUFFERED FROM HEAVY LATE RAINS WHICH KNOCKED DOWN THE MATURE PLANTS. FURTHER DECREASES ARE EXPECTED IN 1977 IN BOLILAND ACREAS UNDER MECHANICAL CULTIVATION DUE TO FUEL SHORTAGEDXN TRACTOR MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS AND REDUCED BUDGET. HOWEVER, DECLINES IN BOLILAND PRODUCTION IS PARTIALLY OFFSET BY INCREASES IN SWAMP ACREAGE UNDER CULTIVATION.

4. COMMERCIAL RICE PURCHASES FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES WILL ABSORB INCREASINGLY SCARCE FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND FUPLHER COMPLICATE PROBLEM OF RESCHEDULING GOSL EXTERNAL DEBT. ATTEMPT AT RESCHEDULING LIKELY TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN EARLY 1977. PL-480 PROGRAM WOULD EASE SIERRA LEONE'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE SHORTAGE. SAMUELS

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